

Wistaston Green Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134998
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	294245
Inspection dates	17–18 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Gill Jones HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	325
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Gill
Headteacher	Ms Linda Davis
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Moreton Road Crewe Cheshire CW2 8QS
Telephone number	01270 568030
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger-than-average sized primary school situated on the outskirts of Crewe. Most children who attend the school live locally. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The majority of the children are of White British heritage. There are a very small number of children from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are no children at the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The percentage of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. The percentage of these children with a statement of special educational need is in line with the national average.

Wistaston Green Infant and Junior Schools amalgamated in September 2005 to form Wistaston Green Primary School. In September 2007, following the closure of another nearby primary school, a large number of children joined Wistaston Green. There has been considerable disruption to the school's staffing. The school has had a succession of headteachers and was without a permanent headteacher in 2007. A new headteacher started in April 2008 and a new deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

This is the first inspection of Wistaston Green since it became a new primary school in 2005. It has experienced a very turbulent three years. Staff and children have lacked direction and standards and achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 have fallen to unacceptably low levels. In July 2007, well over half the children did not reach the standards expected nationally for 11-year-olds in English, mathematics and science. Children's achievement was amongst the lowest in the country. Provisional results for tests and assessments in 2008 indicate that standards improved slightly, but nearly half the children left Year 6 without good enough academic and social skills to do well at secondary school.

A new headteacher started in April 2008. Governors, staff, parents and children say that she has brought fresh hope to the school and has made a positive impact. She has rapidly gained an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has plans of good quality in place to secure improvement. The appointment of a second deputy headteacher who started in September 2008 has added strength to the leadership team. This new leadership team is working together effectively. The staff acknowledge the legacy of underachievement that is evident throughout the school. They are supportive of the new leadership team and are keen to tackle the poor standards and behaviour.

The quality of teaching and the curriculum is inadequate. During the inspection too many of the lessons seen by inspectors were dull. Many children do not make satisfactory progress in their learning and are not sufficiently interested or motivated to do their best. Sometimes the work set does not match the children's ability and they become bored and disruptive. In the few good lessons seen children enjoy learning. In those lessons, their behaviour was good.

The pastoral care for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a strength of the school. Links with other schools and agencies support children and their families well. Parents say they feel welcome in school and they find the staff very approachable.

The appointment of the new headteacher by the governing body, effectively supported by the local authority, is a positive step towards improving the school. The new leadership team appreciates the good quality support it is receiving from the local authority. The actions the headteacher has taken so far, such as improvements to the building and a system to track children's progress, are effective. However, the new leadership team has not yet been in place for long enough to tackle the deeper issues faced by the school. Currently, inadequate teaching, curriculum and behaviour management undermine efforts to improve the children's progress and achievements. Consequently, the capacity of the school to improve is inadequate.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 4

Children enter the Nursery with knowledge, skills and understanding below those expected for children of their age, particularly in their language and communication skills. They settle quickly into the Nursery and are confident learners. They use all the areas available to them and make

good relationships with the staff and other children. Teaching in the Nursery is good and children are happy at school. Parents say the information they receive from staff helps them to support their children's learning.

Most children who attend Reception have already been at the school's Nursery and they settle quickly. Children have access to an attractive outside area. Most play happily. However, weak knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum in Reception means that not all children are making satisfactory progress in their development. Staff miss opportunities to help children to learn, particularly to develop their abilities in speaking and listening. The classroom is not used to stimulate the children's interest and imagination. During the inspection, some teaching in Reception was inadequate. Children do not work and play sensibly and some staff are not vigilant enough to prevent arguments and accidents. Records of assessment are unreliable. Many children leave the Reception class without the skills they need to become confident learners in Key Stage 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of education in the Early Years Foundation Stage and ensure that all children make better progress across all the areas of learning.
- Raise children's standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensure that teaching and learning are at least of consistently good quality.
- Improve the management of pupils' behaviour, so that all children have the opportunity to achieve.
- Ensure that all subject leaders know how well children achieve in their subjects and that they use this information to improve the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Children start school at ages three and four with skills and abilities that are generally below those expected for their age. After two years in school, many children enter Year 1 with skills and abilities well below those normally achieved at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Over the past three years, standards reached by seven-year-olds have been well below those found nationally in reading and writing and below those found nationally in mathematics. Very few children reach the higher level (Level 3). This represents inadequate achievement. The teacher assessments from 2008 show a continuation of this trend and most children start Key Stage 2 with very poor basic skills.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are well below the national average in English, mathematics and science. In 2007, well over half the children left school at age 11 with standards below those reached nationally. This has been the case for the past three years. The achievement of children in Key Stage 2 is, therefore, inadequate. In 2008, the unvalidated test results show a slight improvement, but standards are still well below those expected for 11-year-olds at the end of Key Stage 2. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and vulnerable children make inadequate progress.

Current standards of children's work in their exercise books are well below those expected for their age, particularly in writing. The new headteacher has introduced achievement targets and has an effective system to track children's progress. However, these have not been in place for long enough to have an impact on improving children's achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 4

The personal development of children, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is inadequate. Too many children do not appear to have sufficient respect for themselves, other children or for some adults, so the way they behave in school is often disruptive. Many children are inattentive during lessons. Attendance is improving, but remains well below the national average. Parents and children voiced concerns to inspectors about bullying. Some children say they do not feel safe in school. Most children enjoy leading an active lifestyle and like taking part in vigorous exercise during physical education. They appreciate the new sports coaching. However, at lunch-time, many children do not choose to eat healthily, much food is wasted and behaviour is sometimes poor. The school council has been re-elected for the start of the school year. The council has yet to be involved fully in improving the school community and many children are not yet aware of what the council does. Previous school councils have chosen play equipment and helped with gardening. Children like the new after school activities that have just started and are keen to take part. They also appreciate the opportunity to learn an instrument and the new football club.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Too much of the teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory and not enough was good. Some was inadequate. Typically, teaching lacks challenge and does not capture the children's interest or imagination. Teachers do not always explain the work clearly enough and the children are sometimes confused about what they have to do. This leads to some poor behaviour, which teachers then have to manage rather than helping groups with their learning. Some teachers do not have clear lesson plans showing what they expect different groups of children to learn, and the work set does not always match the children's abilities. This slows the progress made by some children. Expectations generally are not set high enough and teaching lacks the tenacity to ensure that all children achieve. In the good lessons, the children know exactly what they have to learn and how long they have to complete the task. In these lessons the resources are interesting and very well matched to the children's abilities. The teaching assistants have good relationships with the children and support small groups within the class well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum does not fully meet children's needs and this has led to underachievement. Although there has been a strong emphasis on the basic skills in mathematics and English, teachers do not know the children's levels well enough to match the work to what they need to learn. There has been too little emphasis on other subjects such as history, geography, art, music and design technology. Few opportunities exist for children to have stimulating, enjoyable and relevant experiences, particularly to influence their writing. Although the children work in the Dunwoody, which is a modern eco-building, it is not used effectively as a resource to excite and raise the children's awareness of global issues. The school has only recently improved its facilities for information and communication technology, but these facilities are not used effectively by all staff to plan interesting and exciting lessons. Children who are gifted and

talented are now identified but provision for them is not yet in place. Good plans for a range of after school activities now exist and these are starting this term.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The pastoral care, guidance and support given to the children is satisfactory. Arrangements to safeguard the well-being and health and safety of the children meet current requirements. The new behaviour code is beginning to impact on behaviour and there have been fewer incidents of poor behaviour than last term. However, not all staff are consistent in the way they implement the policy during lessons and it is not yet used effectively at lunch-time. The pastoral needs of vulnerable children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are managed effectively. Good links with outside agencies support the emotional well-being of children and their families. Adult learning courses are available to some parents. Children's work is marked regularly and comments are generally encouraging, but marking does not always indicate how they can improve. There are pockets of good practice where children know their learning targets and are clear about what they need to learn next.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Since the amalgamation, there has been much instability in staffing, including leadership. As a result, children have not reached the standards of which they are capable. The new leadership of the governing body in 2007 marked the beginning of a more effective partnership between the school and local authority, which led to the recent appointment of the new headteacher.

The new headteacher has made a perceptive evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. A clear direction has been set. There is a vision and energy to her plans to improve the school. With the additional key appointment of a second deputy headteacher in September 2008, a strong leadership team is now prepared to tackle the difficult issues facing the school. Subject leaders are keen to improve children's achievements in their subjects, but their experience and capacity are limited. Good links with local schools and community projects support the school's plans for improving provision and community cohesion. However, although the senior leadership has been strengthened, many of the systems to monitor teacher's performance and raise achievement are very new. It is too soon for leaders and managers to have effected sustained improvement in provision or to have raised children's standards and achievements.

The leadership of the governing body is strong. Governors are now starting to hold the school to account, but this is relatively recent; some governors are only just realising their responsibility to monitor the school's performance.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	4
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	4
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	4
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	4
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	4
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	4
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	4
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	4
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

You may remember that Mrs Flitcroft, Mr Wainwright and I recently visited your school to carry out an inspection. Thank you for talking to us and for sharing your views about your school. This letter is to tell you what we found.

We realise that your school has been through very difficult times since it became Wistaston Green Primary School in 2005. There have been many changes and the school has not settled down as everyone had hoped. The result is that the standards of work of many children at Wistaston Green are much lower than that of children in most other primary schools. The behaviour of some children is not good enough.

Because of this, the school has been placed in special measures. This means that another inspector will visit the school every term to check how well it is doing. Now we all need to work together to make things better.

We listened to what you, your parents and the staff and governors had to say. You are pleased with the difference Ms Davis has made so far, particularly to the buildings and starting the new after school activities. You are glad that she wants to improve behaviour – she will need your help with this. Ms Davis already knows the school well and she and the staff are determined to make the other improvements needed to make sure you do better in future. That is a good start!

Your teachers and teaching assistants will need to make sure that they always teach well and match your work closely to what you need to learn next. They need to keep accurate records of what work you can do and check regularly to see that you are making good progress and reach higher standards, particularly in English, mathematics and science. The children in Reception need to have good opportunities to learn while they play. For your part, you must make sure your behaviour is good and that you are kind and helpful to each other.

You and your teachers have my very best wishes.